

THE BEST THING IN THE BEST PLACE

NO. 3002

A SERMON
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"The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide."
Psalms 37:31

THIS verse occurs in a psalm in which the contrast between the righteous and the wicked is drawn in a very vivid fashion. The wicked are depicted as being very frequently rich and prosperous, yet no one who is truly wise would wish to change places with them. The psalmist so plainly points out the brevity of their prosperity, the certainty of their ultimate fate if they continue unregenerate, and the terror of their overthrow, that we are not tempted for a single minute to be envious of them.

As for the righteous, David gives us abundant hints that they will be tried, persecuted, hated, and so on, but he indulges us with such sweet promises from the mouth of the great Father Himself that we feel perfectly satisfied to share the lot of His children, however hard it may sometimes be. If we wish to share the lot of the righteous, we must be as they are, and among other things, this text must be realized in our experience as it is in theirs. The law of our God must be in our heart that our steps may not slide.

I recollect, when I was a lad, hearing a sermon from a text which is almost a parallel to the one before us, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." The divisions of that discourse were so excellent, and they fixed themselves so firmly upon my memory, that I shall borrow them for my own use on this occasion, for I cannot make any better ones for myself. The preacher said, "Here we have the best thing, 'Thy word,' in the best place, 'have I hid in mine heart,' for the best of purposes, 'that I might not sin against thee.'" Those are to be the divisions of my text, only altered thus—the *best thing*, "the law of his God," in the *best place*, "is in his heart," with the *best result*, "None of his steps shall slide."

I. So I am first to speak, for a few minutes, about THE BEST THING, "The law of his God."

In these Gospel days we must use this expression in a wider sense than may have been originally intended by David, and take it to mean *a great deal more than the moral law*. If we are Christians, we delight in that law, but we are not under it as a rule of condemnation and of judgment, but we rejoice to obey it. We could not suggest an alteration to it which would be an improvement. The ten commandments are very simple, but absolutely perfect for the purpose for which they were intended. To add another to them or to take one away from them would be to spoil the whole.

We "delight in the law of God after the inward man." Whoever may be Antinomians, that is, those who are "against the law," we are not to be numbered amongst them, for we can say with Paul, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good," and though we are carnal and often feel ourselves "sold under sin," yet we cannot find any fault with the law.

If eternal life could have come by any law, it would have come by that law, and even though that law now can do nothing for us but condemn us, yet, as we hear its terrible sentence, we feel that the law "is holy, and just, and good." We desire then, to have even the moral law in our hearts, and to have it written there, that none of our steps may slide.

But we cannot use David's expression in that limited sense only, *it must now include the whole Book of God, and all its teachings*, for it is often used in that sense. "The law of his God is in his heart." Take this expression as referring to the whole of Scripture, and I may truly say that it is the best thing.

O my brethren, what can be better for informing the understanding than the Word of God? Would you know God? Would you know yourself? Then search this Book. Would you know time, and how to spend it? Would you know eternity, and how to be prepared for it? Then, search you this Book. Would you know the evil of sin, and how to be delivered from it? Would you know the plan of salvation, and how you can have a share in it? This is the Book which will instruct you in all these matters.

There is nothing which a man needs to know for the affairs of his soul, between here and heaven, of which this Book will not tell him. Blessed are they that read it both day and night, and especially blessed are they who read it with their eyes opened and illuminated by the divine Spirit. If you want to be wise unto salvation, select the Word of God, and especially the Spirit of God, as your Teacher. There is nothing else that is equal to the Bible for inflaming, sanctifying, and turning in the right direction, all the passions of the soul.

Perhaps you are not satisfied with merely knowing, you want something or someone to love. You men and women with large hearts, whose one desire is to have a worthy objective for your affections to fix upon, turn to this Word of God, this law, this Gospel of His, and you will see there how God Himself becomes the objective of His creatures' love, and how, in the person of His Son, you have the loveliest objective upon which human eyes ever gazed. You have, in Him, One who is so lovely that a glance from His eye is enough to set your soul on flame, and to make your heart enamored of Him forever.

You who have mighty founts of love welling up in your soul, may come and let them flow most freely here, for here is One who is worthy of them all, and when you have loved Christ as much as you can, you have not loved Him half as much as He deserves to be loved. Here your passions may burn, and blaze, and glow with sacred ardor, without any fear of your being idolaters, and without any risk of your being deceived.

And if you want something more than enlightenment for the understanding, and fullness of love to satisfy the heart—if you need practical directions for your everyday life—this Book will supply you with them. In every part of the sea of life in which a man may be, if this be his chart, he will not miss his way, or suffer spiritual shipwreck.

If you were a king, you might learn your duty here, and if you are a beggar, or the poorest of the poor, you may find comfort and instruction here. Fathers, you may here learn how to manage your households. Children, you may learn here the duties of your position in your various relationships. Servants, masters, husbands, wives, sick folk, people in robust health, you who are poor, and you who are rich—this Book is for you all, and when you consult it in the right spirit, it will talk with you all. Into whatever condition you may happen to be cast, this Book will follow you.

It is such a wonderful Book that it adapts itself to all sorts and conditions of men. It whispers softly by the sick man's bedside, and it has often called aloud, as with a trumpet voice, amidst the fury of the storm. It has a message for you while you are yet in the heyday of your youth, and a promise for you when you lean upon your staff, and totter to your grave! It is *Biblos*, the Book, the everyday book, full of wisdom for every day in the week, all year round, and when the circle of life is complete, you will see how the Book was equally adapted to the children and to the aged man whose life is just closing.

Perhaps, dear friend, you say, "I know the path that I ought to take, I know whom I ought to love, and I trust I am instructed as to what I ought to believe, for all this I prize the Bible very highly, but what I really need is the courage of my convictions, the force of character which shall enable me to tread in those ways which I know to be right."

Yes, I know what you mean, but where else will you find truths that have such power as those which glisten in the pages of this blessed Book? Where will you read any records so calculated to fire men with dauntless bravery as those that are contained in this Book? Above all, in Him who is the sum and substance of this Book, to whom all its pages point, you can see an example of disinterested love and perfect consecration to God and man which will suffice if the Holy Spirit shall bless it to you, to give you all the force of character and courageousness of spirit that you can possibly need.

If young men would read their Bibles more, they would not be so easily turned aside as they now are. When a young man puts his foot down for the right and says, “I cannot and I will not tell a lie, or commit an act of dishonesty in business, or frequent places of amusement where I cannot go with a clear conscience,” I believe that he has cleansed his way by taking heed thereto according to God’s Word. I see here the treasure house of holy courage. Commune with God, commune with Christ Jesus, commune with saints, and martyrs, and apostles as you read these pages, and you yourself will imbibe something of their determination and resolution, something of their zeal and energy for the right and the true.

It is here that true men are made, as they peruse these pages, the weak grow strong and dwarfs develop into giants. Ay, and if you say, “I often feel unhappy, there is an aching void within my spirit, a something which prevents me from being perfectly satisfied, I have a kind of horse-leech somewhere within me which cries, ‘Give, give,’ and I have not yet found the food with which to stop its clamor,” it is in this Book that you will find the comfort which your spirit craves. Here every grief may be allayed, every right desire satisfied, and all wrong desires and evil lusting be ejected from the spirit.

When the Holy Spirit applies this Book to the soul, it is food for man’s hunger, and medicine for man’s disease. It lays its hand upon his fevered brow, and cools him down to health, or if he is too cold, it warms him into holy energy. In fact, there is no end to the blessings which this Book bestows.

*“This is the field where hidden lies
The pearl of price unknown,
That merchant is divinely wise
Who makes the pearl his own.”*

This is the best of books, as Christopher Harvey says—

*“It is the Book of God. What if I should
Say, God of Books?
Let him that looks
Angry at that expression, as too bold,
His thoughts in silence smother
Till he find such another.”*

Its every page is a sheet of gold, nay, rather let me say that heaven’s banknotes are here, to be cashed by them who have faith enough to bring them to the God that issued them, that He may make their souls rich to all the intents of bliss.

This, then, is the best thing, “The law of his God.”

II. Now secondly, we have the best thing IN THE BEST PLACE, “The law of his God is in his heart.” What does this mean?

It means, first, that *he loves it*. That which we love is always said to be in our hearts, and the reason why he loves it is given in the text, “The law of *his* God”—not merely the law of *God*, mark you—but “The law of *his* God.” Men do not love the law of God until they know that He is their God. Blessed indeed is this precious possession which God gives us first in Himself, and then in His Word.

Do you not all like to read a book which has been written by a near and dear friend? It must have greater interest for you than the works of strangers ever can have. You may pass over a hundred books on a stall, or in a shop, but if you notice a volume which was written by one who was your play fellow, or perhaps by one who is nearer and dearer still, you take an interest in that book at once.

So is it with this blessed Book, which was written by our Heavenly Father—this Book which tells us of our elder Brother—this Book into which the divine Spirit has breathed the breath of life, and upon which He always shines as the great Illuminator—this Book must always be indescribably dear to us.

How dear has the Bible been to God’s saints in past ages! They have even run the risk of losing their lives rather than part with it, and many of them have actually died as martyrs because they would

translate it, and pass its messages on to others, and this Book is equally dear to us. Sooner than give up the smallest jot or tittle of its inspired teaching, I trust that we would be prepared to go to the stake as our brave forefathers did in cruel Queen Mary's day. Precious Bible, you are in our hearts because we love you.

But David meant more than that, the law of his God was in his heart *to be remembered* as well as to be loved. We soon forget what we only learn in our head, so we tell our children to learn things "by heart." What is written in the head may be erased, but what is written in the heart abides there. Neither sickness, nor death, nor the devil himself can ever take from us what is in our hearts. We have known people in sore sickness suffer from loss of memory, and that is a very serious loss, but we have known them retain their recollections of spiritual things unimpaired when they have forgotten their own wives or husbands, so strangely does the mind or heart hold most firmly to that which is most deeply engraven upon it.

If you have the Word of God in your hearts, it will not matter who may try to tear it from you. All the Jesuits in or out of hell could not wrest from a man the Gospel that is written in his heart. They could easily turn some people from their creed because it is only a creed, lying loosely in their brain. But the truth which has really entered the heart of a man, neither Satan nor all his hosts could ever take from him. See you to it then, that the law of your God is in your heart, so deeply affecting you and so powerfully moving you, that it abides so tenaciously in your memory that you can never give it up.

"The law of his God is in his heart," has a third meaning, namely, that *he obeys it*, for the heart is the most influential organ of the body. What is done in the heart affects every part of the man. Disease there means that the man, as a whole, cannot be well. If the heart's affections be set on God, all is right, for the intent, the motive, sways the man. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." If your heart's eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light, but if your heart's eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

If the law of God is in the heart, then every pulsing of that cerebral organ will affect the entire man. If the man has led an evil life, he will be altogether changed by it, and if, through the restraining grace of God, he has been somewhat better than others, the law of his God will operate in his heart and life, and do for him all that he could well desire to have done as he yields obedience to it.

To have the law of God in your heart means, in fact, that *you live by it*—that you have the Gospel as the food of your soul, and that you have the Christ of the Gospel as your hope for eternity. The heart is that by which we live, so, if the law of God is in our heart, we shall live by it and draw our comfort, as well as our sustenance, from it. Let each one judge how far this is true concerning himself.

We are not perfect, but we wish we were, and this proves that the law of our God is in our heart. We sin, but we grieve that we sin, and this proves that there is within us a longing for perfect holiness. We say, with the apostle Paul, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not...When I would do good, evil is present with me." Yet that *will*-ing and *would*-ing prove that our heart has the law of God within it. God looks upon you, dear friends, very much according to what you desire to be, and if there be, in your soul, strong pangs of desire after that which is perfect, He accepts those desires, and blesses you through Christ Jesus His Son.

John Bunyan used to put it in one of his simple allegories something like this. He says, "You want a man to fetch a doctor, and you tell him to be quick, so he mounts his horse, but it is a sorry jade, and very lame, and cannot go fast, yet you see that your man would fly if he could, for he is whipping and spurring the creature with all his might to try to make it go. So," says Bunyan, "the Lord often sees that the spirit is willing—whipping and spurring, but the flesh is weak—like the lame horse, He sees what His servants would fain be and accepts them as if they were really so." It is well for us that we have so gracious a Master, who looks so favorably upon our imperfect service.

Have the law of God in your hearts, my brethren, and albeit that you are foolish today, you will conquer some of those follies tomorrow, and you will, by God's grace, go on to conquer more and more,

until the law, written on your heart, shall also be written on all your members, and you shall be presented spotless and faultless before the throne of God.

III. Now I must pass on to the last point, namely, THE BEST RESULT, “None of his steps shall slide.”

Here is a man who has God’s Word in his heart, and you notice that *he takes pains about his steps*. A step is a very little thing, we must take a good many hundreds of steps to walk a mile, but good men take notice of little things. The man who has the law of God in his heart is scrupulous and conscientious about thoughts and imaginations, as well as about words and actions. Hence, the promise in the text is suited to him, for it is a promise about little things, “None of his *steps* shall slide.”

I recollect—nay, I hope it is so with me still—but I recollect that just after my conversion, I used to be almost afraid to put one foot before the other, lest I should put it down in the wrong place, and often have I paused when I was speaking, for fear I would not say the right word. That holy caution is most commendable in all who have it, I wish that many more had it. What a hop, skip, and jump some men’s lives are! Not only do they not look before they leap, but they do not even seem to look after they have leaped. They rush on blindly and heedlessly, presuming where they ought to be praying, and self-confident where they ought, with deep repentance, to be humbling themselves before God.

Our old proverb says, “Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves,” and the same rule applies to our actions. If we are careful about our little actions, the great ones will be pretty sure to be right. Oh, that we were all very guarded about how we act at home! Oh, that we were careful about our speech as we sit around the tea table! Such a little thing as that may do almost infinite mischief. I believe the worst evils in the world arise out of little things. It is said that the seed of mischief is as small as a midge’s egg, and so it is. Then look well to those midge’s eggs, lest they hatch out far greater evils.

I think too, that *whenever Christians go wrong, it is concerning something about which they thought they were quite safe*, like the children of Israel with the Gibeonites. These people came to Gilgal wearing old garments, old shoes and clouted, and carrying bread that was dry and moldy. What need was there to ask counsel of God? It was as clear as the sun at noonday that they had come from a long distance, wishing to make a league with the Israelites because of the wonders that God had wrought for His people, so even Joshua did not pray about the matter, and he was deceived, for these Gibeonites were near neighbors and had thus tricked the Israelites into a league which was always an impediment to them in their campaign.

Always suspect where you have no suspicion, and be afraid where you are not afraid, be especially afraid of a man who tells you that you have no need to be afraid of him. There was a man who said to a friend of mine, “I want a loan of so much from you. You know that I am all right. I have been a member of a Christian church for so many years, I am not like So-and-so, and So-and-so, who lately failed. You can trust me, you know.” “No,” said my friend, “you are the sort of man I would not trust with a bad half-crown,” and he was right, for those who did trust him lost their all.

Be very cautious in such cases as that, if you are dealing with those who are known to be rogues, you hardly need to be put on your guard, but if you are dealing with rogues who pretend to be honest men, you must have all your wits about you or they will certainly take you in. They have covered up their wolf nature with sheepskin, so you had better see what is underneath the skin.

When David says, “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide,” what does he mean by that last clause? He means that *God will guide him*. As he has God’s law in his heart, he will have God’s guidance for his steps! In the twenty-third verse, David says, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.” When a man really carries God’s law in his heart, God will take care that he does not carry that law into any evil place, for as David goes on to say, “the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.”

There will come to every man, whoever or whatever he may be, sudden assaults of temptation, but if the law of his God is in his heart, he will be forewarned and forearmed against them. There will also

come the long sieges of temptation, and many a man has fallen by little and little, but if the law of his God is in his heart, he will be safe against even them. There will come, sometimes, the temptation which results from loneliness, when he will be urged by Satan to do evil. As no human eye is upon him, may he not do wrong? But with the law of his God in his heart, he will not do any wrong even though he might never be found out, that law within his heart is a sufficient check to keep him from evil.

Sometimes he will be in perplexity. I wonder whether every businessman here is not, at some time or other, puzzled to know what he ought to do. He is most anxious to do the right thing, but he does not know which of two courses is right. Well, that is the time to let the law of your God, which is in your heart, be like a compass to you, and to plead this promise and say, "O Lord, Thou hast said that as Thy law is within my heart, none of my steps shall slide, fulfill Thy Word unto Thy servant, whereon Thou hast caused me to hope."

For your steps to slide would be for you to bring dishonor upon your character. How many men who have stood firm for a while, either in the Christian church or in business life, have thus slidden! I recollect reading some years ago, when there were some sad failures of this sort, that "neither the white cravats of Exeter Hall, nor the drab coats of Lombard Street, could prevent some men from being great rascals," and there has sometimes been only too much reason to say that. But the law of God in the heart is better than a white cravat at the throat or a drab coat on the back, for it does keep men's steps so that they do not dishonor their God.

Trials may come to those who live nearest to God—possibly they will come all the more because these people have lived near to God, but there will not be the stain upon the character, or the casting down from integrity, which causes so much sorrow. A true Christian would sooner die than that this should happen, and he may comfort himself with the assurance that if the law of his God be in his heart, "none of his steps shall slide."

Nor shall he slide into despair. He may tremble, he may totter, he may be almost down, but as he has the law of his God in his heart, he shall scramble to his feet again, and shall still hold on his way. I hope all of you, who have to fight the good fight of faith, and to journey as pilgrims to heaven, will take to yourselves all the comfort you can possibly get out of this text. You have asked to have the law of your God in your heart and it is there, well then, you shall be upheld.

You are going to live, young man, where there are no other Christians, but your steps shall not slide, for the law of your God is in your heart. You are going, my brother, to occupy a position where a large number of people will be under your charge, and you hardly know how you will manage them, but with the law of your God in your heart, none of your steps shall slide. You are going, my young sister, to live with ungodly relatives where you will scarcely get an opportunity for private prayer, yet, with the law of your God in your heart, none of your steps shall slide. My young brother, you are about to become the pastor of a large church, and you tremble lest you should make some great mistake, and bring dishonor upon God, but if His law is in your heart, none of your steps shall slide.

You need not mind about the slipperiness of the way if the law of your God is in your heart. Many slip when the road is not slippery, and many a man, by God's grace, stands fast where it seems a miracle that he stands at all. Men are not in danger in proportion to their position, they are in danger or in safety according to the measure of their grace. If the law of your God be in your heart, you might face a world in arms, and not be afraid. If God should make you the leader of a thousand squadrons of the armies of heaven on their white horses, you would be able to command them all if you had His law in your heart, and yielded yourself wholly to Him.

Note also that if you have the law of your God in your hearts, *this implies that you also have the Lawgiver there*, for you cannot separate the Divine Lawgiver from His law. Do you love Him? Do you trust Him? Is His name melodious to your ear? Is it like ointment poured forth, for sweetness, to your spirit? If you love Him who gives you the law, you must love the law that He gives. We are under law—the law of grace—to Jesus Christ, His yoke is easy, and His burden is light, to those who trust and love Him. If you do trust and love Him, that proves that you have His law in your hearts.

Again, if you have the law of your God in your heart, *you have also there the great Teacher of the law, namely, the Holy Spirit*. You are conscious of His comforts, sometimes of His rebukes, and often of His encouragements. How is it with you in this respect? Do you know anything about the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart? Alas, there are many who do not know that there is a Holy Ghost, for they have never felt His power, but the law of God is never in the heart until the Holy Ghost puts it there, and where He puts that law, He abides with it, to open our understanding that we may receive the Scriptures, and to open the Scriptures that our understanding may receive them.

What do you know about God the Son? Is He your Savior? What do you know about the Holy Ghost? Is He your Quickener and Comforter? If He is, be of good cheer, for none of your steps shall slide.

But if He is not, and if you reject this law of God, remember that solemn text, “Their feet shall slide in due time.” They stand up in their prosperity, they are great, famous, happy, full of mirth, and we are apt to envy them as we see them upon their high places, but watch! They are standing upon an Alp of ice, the pathway which they tread is very narrow, and in a moment, when they do not expect it, their feet shall slide, and they shall descend into the abyss which has no bottom! Down they go, lost, *lost*, LOST!

The high places they once occupied only increase the depth of their fall. They go from their full wine cups to craving a drop of water to cool their parched tongues. They go from the dainties of Dives’ table to the uttermost woes of hell. Lazarus once begged for their crumbs, and now they would fain turn beggars, and ask a boon of Lazarus himself. Their day is changed into night, their glory into shame, their banquets into miseries, their honors into everlasting shame and contempt.

Be wise, men and women, and seek your Savior now, lest, as a dream when one awakes, the beauty of your present mortal life should all pass away, and there should remain nothing but the ghastly form of a wasted existence to be visited forever with the strokes of JEHOVAH’S awful wrath.

*“Ye sinners seek His grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find salvation there.*

*So shall that curse remove,
By which the Savior bled;
And the last awful day shall pour
His blessings on your head.”*

God bless you all, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 37

This is one of the psalms of David which have often cheered the saints of God when they have been perplexed because of the prosperity of the wicked and their own troubles.

Verses 1-2. *Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*

What if their lot be sweet? Yet consider how short it is. No wise man envies the bullock which is being fattened, for he knows that it is being fattened for the slaughter. None will envy the ungodly their pleasures when they remember how transient they must be. Let them have them, and I would urge all Christians to do their best to make the ungodly happy. This is the only happy time they can ever have unless they repent, and turn to the Lord, so do not make them unhappy, but contribute all you can to the

little bliss they will ever know, for it will soon be over. Certainly, if you are a child of God, you have no cause to envy them.

3-4. *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

Here is a duty which is as much a pleasure as it is a duty, nay, it is even more a pleasure than a duty, “Delight thyself also in the LORD.” Here is a commandment to be happy in the safest conceivable way. Of all delights, the most delicious is delight in God, and to this we are commanded. But what a privilege is that which is annexed to it, “He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” Why is this? Because, when you delight in God, your desires will be such as He can safely grant. Delighting in Him, you will only desire that which is for His glory, and then, without any restriction, He may promise to you, and give to you the desires of your heart.

5. *Commit thy way unto the LORD;*

Blindly, yet believingly, put your hand into His hand, and follow wherever He may lead you.

5-7. *Trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD,—*

Oh, what sweet precepts these are!—easier to read and to hear than they are to practice, yet, if grace be given to us, we shall find them blessedly easy to practice. Surely, if it is easy to rest anywhere, it must be easy to “rest in the LORD.” There is no such resting place anywhere else like that where omnipotence and eternal love are sweetly joined together, “Rest in the LORD,”—

7-9. *And wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.*

I believe that in a right sense, the child of God does get the best of both worlds. He may not get, in this world, what ungodly men think the best, and as far as worldly good is concerned, he often gets the worst there, but God makes his dinner of herbs to be sweeter to him than the stalled ox is to the wicked. If I knew that I should die like a dog, I would still wish to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter, no world to come, and even if my lot, judged after the manner of men, should be of all men’s most miserable, yet to have had God to be my Friend here would have turned even that misery into happiness.

*“O God of love, how blest are they
Who in Thy ways delight!
Thy presence guides them all the day,
And cheers them all the night.”*

10. *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.*

How often even the place where he lived—his house—becomes a ruin. The very palace where the tyrant dwelt is burnt down, or destroyed in some other way, decay seems to delight to work with the teeth of time upon the palaces of despots.

11. *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

There is a great fulfillment of that prophecy yet to come in the latter days, but it is fulfilled even now. Who does not see that the man who really enjoys life, and enjoys the world, is, after all, the meek, humble minded Christian? That shepherd of Salisbury Plain, of whom we used to read in our childhood, when he was asked what he thought of the weather, said it was good weather, for God sent it, and any sort of weather pleased him if it pleased God. Anybody can see that a man of that kind is in a healthy state, and that he inherits the earth, and possesses far more of what is worth having—namely, ease and peace of mind—than the owner of broad acres who has no true rest of heart in the Lord.

12-19. *The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

Let me read that nineteenth verse again, so that any child of God here, who is in great straits, may be able to lay hold upon it, “They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.”

20-25. *But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth, and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

We have often remarked here that we also, though we are not old, have never seen the righteous forsaken, and we do not think that the oldest man or woman here has ever seen the righteous forsaken. David says that he had not seen the seed of the righteous begging bread. Well, he was a king, so he was not likely to see very many poor people, but we have several times seen the seed of the righteous begging bread.

It is not a common thing, but we have seen it, and when the seed of the righteous misbehave themselves—when they disgrace their father’s name—they will have to beg bread the same as other people’s children do. They will come to poverty through idleness and drink just as other people do. And it has been my unhappy lot, within these very walls, to have to minister relief to the unworthy and reprobate sons of Christian ministers, about whose piety I could entertain no doubt, and some of whom are now in heaven. These good men’s children have walked contrary to God, so God has walked contrary to them. I have often hoped that the poverty I saw might be the means of bringing them to seek the God of their fathers!

You, who fear the Lord may depend upon this—if the Lord helps you to train up your children aright, He will take care of them. If they are truly the seed of the righteous by being themselves righteous, your children shall not beg bread, for the Lord will provide for them, and you will find that God always takes care of the children of those who faithfully serve Him. He seems to say to them, “You mind My business, and I will mind your business. If you look after My children, I will look after yours.” If we serve the Lord with all our hearts, we may fairly reckon that the God of the fathers will be the God of the children.

26-40. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their*

strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—107 (SONG 2), 119 (SONG 2), 652

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